NASCOE National Convention 2017, St. Charles, Missouri.

NOTES from Question and Answer Thursday August 03, 2017

- National Office Staff Present: Rob Johansson-Acting Deputy Under Secretary, Chris Beyerhelm-Acting ADM, Brad Karmen- Acting DAFP, John Chott-Assit. DAFO, Darren Ash- FSA CIO, Radha Sekar-CFO, Thomas Mulhern-HRD, Mark Rucker-DAM, Glenn Schafer-BTO, Doug Nash, Francisco Salguero, Jim Radintz-DAFLP, Brenda Carlson-Regional Public Affairs Bob McGrath-OBF BPMS, Catherine Kuhlmeier-OBF BPMS, Courtney Dixon, FLP

Questions

1. AGI's- Are there plans to improve the IRS Processing of AGI's?
    a. After the first of the Fiscal year there are plans to have national office staff set down with the IRS to see the process of which they handle the forms and try to determine a more efficient process.

2. The 2018 Budget had a proposed 8% staffing cut, how are looking at combatting this?
    a. 200 positions have been approved already, looking at requesting an additional 200 positions. Right now 10,425 are in employment and we are projecting to grow to 11,000 employees.

3. Wetland Determations are taking too long (some have taken 3 years) and we have an ever increasing number of violations, what actions can we take to get them done quicker?
    a. No definitive answer was given

4. Results from workload toolkit, when and what can we expect?
    a. Administration needs to look at the need for office closures/restructure/combination

5. In regards to the hiring freeze, are we going to wait until reorganization?
    a. Wanting a blanket waiver for internal hiring
    b. Wanting to get 200 additional external hires approved

6. Temporary employees hired after 1989 can't buy back time however those that started before 1989 and retired, the conflict has been settled. DAFO has looked at this, this is law and would require an act of Congress to change.

7. Bridges to Opportunity training is going to be provided to STO employees and sent down from them.

8. What were the results of the satisfaction survey of Bridges to Opportunity
    a. A lot of negative feedback, however most of the negative feedback was about having to complete a receipt for service which are completely separate.

9. Why haven't we received the Presidents picture yet?
    a. The national office hasn't received it yet

10. Can we expect skills training for PTs?
    a. National office would love to do a skills training, but that would mean not having positions filled to provide money for the training.

11. In regards to drought and CRP Grazing, only Counties and producers that were affected can sale to other affected producers.

12. How do we record Comp time when Comp time is not given? Do webta records be correct or do we let work fall to the waist side?
    a. Chris Behelymer- we need to be more selective on what we work on.
13. The National Office has said Common Programs is being over used, can a new code be made for processing AGI's?
    a. There are already too many codes we don't want people to be more confused, but we can explore new options.

14. In regards to late file crop reports not being accepted pas the subsequent year reporting date, can this be revised for hay and pasture?
    a. NO

15. CARS/ACRSI is being looked at in regards to a geospatial reporting aspect to better match producer's records.
16. When donating leave, the agency is greatly benefiting from higher pay scale employees donating to lower pay scale employees, can we look at the dollar amount per hour being donated instead of equal hours.

a. Example, a CED donates 1 hour of leave to a grade 5 PT, the hourly pay of a grade 12 CED Vs. a Grade 5 PT is for easy math 3 to 1, can we get these pt's more hours.
    i. This is something that can be looked at and talked about, more discussion will be needed.

17. Are Acting CED's going to get more incentive to help until someone is hired?
    a. We have spot awards and supervisors are encouraged to use them.

18. Are RMA, NRCS, and FSA in the long run going to be combined?
    a. Nothing is in final writing but reorganization is being looked at.

NASCOE National Convention 2017, St. Charles, Missouri.

NOTES from Regular Meeting Thursday August 03, 2017

- Kentucky Role Call – 13 active employees present-7 active employees and 6 Retirees. Kentucky Attendees included: Barry Allen, Susan Girten, Laura Howell, Joyce Logsdon, Emerson Rider, Roger Swatzell, Jeanie Williams, Donald Dunn, Jason Issac, Travis Chick, Dana McKinney, Dawn Ovesen, and Katie Taylor

- 2018 National Convention will be held in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. There is an airport in Sioux Falls (Sioux Falls Regional Airport) however the comment was made that it would be much cheaper to fly in at Rapid City Regional Airport and drive the rest of the way. Look for upcoming information at https://nascoe.org

- Bid for 2019 proposed, 2019 National Convention will be held in Manhattan, Kansas. Manhattan Regional Airport is the fly in location. Four Possible hotels in consideration ranging from $102.00 and $129.00 a night. Look for upcoming information at https://nascoe.org

- Wes Daniels spoke about the hiring freeze being lifted. 200 internal/external positions were approved and an additional 200 has been requested but is waiting for approval. A blanket approval has been requested for internal hiring.

- Wes spoke about the workload toolkit and its expected appearance in this fall to calculate county office workload. What does this mean for small county offices? The good news is the Senate and House budget is higher than the presidents.

- Will there be office closures and more joint management?- Is there a possibility of Regional Offices and combinations with NRCS?
    - *Hunter Morehead- nothing is in final writing there are changes expected but nothing has been put on paper. NASCOE officials and Hunter are reminding officials of the importance of FSA and the presence needed to serve our Farmers, Producers, and Ranchers.*

- Brad Karmen spoke about 2019 upcoming changes for MPP. Basic coverage level is looking at being reconsidered at $6.00 / 90 percent and meeting the difference for 1 month instead of 2 months consecutively.

- $6.3 Billion were lended last year.

NASCOE National Convention 2017, St. Charles, Missouri.

Southeast Area Break Out, Friday, August 04, 2017

Area Executive-David Curtis, CED, Mt. View, AR

Are Executive Alternate- Mike Mayfield, CED, Pulaski, TN

- Candidacy Announcements for Southeast Area Executive
  - *Mike Mayfield, CED, Pulaski, TN*
- Candidacy Announcements for Southeast Area Executive Alternate
  - *Dawn Ovesen, CED, Tompkinsville, KY*
- Awards Chair proposed for Time Awards that County offices receive a plaque every eligible year and that individuals receive a certificate and a Pen
  - *Micki Crider, national awards chair stated the cost of a plaque at $90. The group voted on the plaques needing more discussion and research.*
- Mike Mayfield was elected Southeast Area Executive
- Dawn Ovesen was elected Southeast Area Executive Alternate.
- 2018 Southeast Area Rally was announced that it would be held in Lexington, KY and the Embassy Suites in April.

NASCOE National Convention 2017, St. Charles, Missouri.

Notes from Regular Meeting Friday, August 04, 2017

- Candidacy Announcements for 2018
  - *President-Dennis Ray, CED, Perryville, MO*
  - *Vice President- Brandon Wilson, CED, Marysville, KS*
  - *Secretary*
    - *Tammey Eibey, CED, Anamosa, IA*
    - *Marcinda Kester, CED, Bartow, FL*
  - *Treasurer- Curt Houk, CED, Chariton, IA*

- Hunter Morehead discussed reorganization plan/ Merger/ staffing and what is in Negotiation. See attached 2017 NASCOE Negotiation Items

NASCOE National Convention 2017, St. Charles, Missouri.

Programs Breakout Friday, August 04, 2017

Administered by National Programs Chair, Dana McKinney

National Office: Darren Ash, Brent Orr, Brad Karmen, Radha Sekar, Catherine Kuhlmeier

- Emails can be accessed from home if your computer has a card reader. Go to CTS Home Page for Link or CTS Icon and bottom of screen of computer in office.
    - *Hoping to get emails to phones and tablets*

- Is there a solution we can work towards to not kick out Crop report or any other contracts when GIS editing is completed?
    - *This could be happening because the software is installed correctly or was just made in disregard to the programs, but this is being looked at.*

- Are the efforts to change the CRP Cost Share Software (CSS)?
    - *Looking at possibly using the same software for cost share as NRCS*

- Policy issues on CRP Cost Share are to extensive, is there anything in the works for making this simpler?
    - *Would like to use a flat rate like NRCS.*
        - *Example: building fence for CRP, as long as fence is built to spec a flat rate would be paid not to exceed cost incurred.*

- Bridges to Opportunity, could there be an automatic roll over from programs software for receipt of service and WEBTA?
    - *The software just isn't there and there is no money to make it this way at this time.*

- National Office is in the process of negotiating with software writers a simpler and more user friendly process, but this will not happen this fall more than likely.

- ARC/PLC- RMA and Nass yields and data will be released to the public. The difference in yields could result in a different payment that could have been made, will this not just add fuel to the fire?
    - *This data has to be released to help determine a better policy for which yields to use for the next farm bill.*
        - ***Will take law to change base acres, but nothing is in writing yet.***

- In regards to the difference in shares on 578, vs. Shares on contracts, what can be done?
    - *According to 1 ARC/PLC, Par 217 A, Division of Payment Guidelines and Example,. A Division of Payment Guidelines. There are various factors that may influence the proper division of payments. In reviewing CCC-861, CCC-862, or FSA-578 division of payment and shares, COC's should consider the following: past history on a farm, *--whether the producers claiming a share have control of sufficient cropland or DCP, cropland, and an entitlement to a crop share interest to support the claimed payment share on CCC-861, CCC-862, or FSA-578. :In cases where a farm's base acres are greater than the farm's cropland or where the FSA-578 shares on FSA-578 reported land are not sufficient to substantiate question of control of all the base acres on the farm, the persons or legal entities claiming a share of base acres on CCC-861 or CCC-862 must provide documentation that they have control over land necessary to cover enrolled base acres.--**

NASCOE National Convention 2017, St. Charles, Missouri.

Notes from Regular Meeting Saturday, August 05, 2017

- 2019 National Convention Site Selected
- Officers and committee chair's reports were presented
- President Elect Unanimously voted on
  - *Dennis Ray*
- Vice- President Elect Unanimously voted on
  - *Brandon Wilson*
- Secretary Elect Privatley voted on by ballot
  - *Marcinda Kester.*
- Area Chairs and Alternates announced

Closing remarks were given and awards banquet was held that night.

2017 NASCOE Negotiation Items

USDA Whitten Building, Room 104-A, WDC

Tuesday, April 4, 2017

8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. EDT

ITEM 1: LOAN APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Issue*:* Currently, 1-FLP, Par. 25 outlines that SED's, in conjunction with FLC, should identify areas of their State that could justify and benefit from CED having loan approval and servicing authority.

The office or area where CED would be designated by SED to obtain loan making and servicing approval authority must meet both of the following conditions.

- Direct and/or guaranteed caseload in the office or area is high, complex, or geographically challenging and FLM, SFLO, or FLP team servicing the office or area needs additional help.

- CED has sufficient time for additional responsibilities required to obtain and maintain loan making and servicing authority without negatively impacting CED's current farm program obligations.

The announcement of the new Microloan-FSFL program is an exciting opportunity to reach a new customer base with a streamlined loan product, but an already heavy workload of FLP loans may be an obstacle in this implementation.

NASCOE Position*:* Many Farm Loan teams already have a broad portfolio of direct and guaranteed loans, including microloans. Their workload in some locations is at a level that already equates to delayed processing of FSFL applications. This impacts our ability to deliver Microloan-FSFLs, which by nature are intended to be streamlined, easily accessible, and quickly processed.

A good number of CED's have either educational background or work history that includes finance, and equips them to be a candidate for Farm Loan approval authority.

When loan applicants present to FSA with a proposed project and are assigned to work with FLO/FLM to determine credit worthiness, we may see situations where customers could be redirected to the FLP Microloan program, instead of the FSFL.

A change in policy that would allow for CED's to have a limited Loan Approval Authority specific to FSFLs up to $50,000 or $100,000, this would allow for a much more streamlined implementation of the FSFL Program, specifically the recently announced Microloan-FSFL.

A suggestion is for CED's be required to complete Phase 1 of the FLOT program as currently prescribed in 6-PM, Part. 13, but then complete Phase 2 in a modified format to include meeting the state-established credit quality standards on a prescribed number of independently prepared files, which consist only of FSFLs up to $50,000/$100,000, or comparable direct microloans.

This delegation of authority would apply to loan approval only for FSFLs. It would accomplish a significantly improved delivery of service for FSFL applications, particularly in counties without a full-time FLP presence.

(Reference #1)

DAFLP Response: According to 1-FSFL Handbook, the COC or STC is the approval official for FSFL loans, and FLP loan approval officials only provides a recommendation. FSFL loans are not mentioned in the loan delegation section of FLP Handbook (1-FLP), only Exhibit 15 for FBP, which describes how to document the recommendation. Our FLP handbooks only cover FLP functions and program policies and procedures. We believe changes for approval of FSFL Microloans be a Price Support/DAFP, rather than DAFLP, decision.

DAFO Response: This would be a sea-change in CED duties requiring major discussions with DAFO, HRD, and FLP. Likewise, any such changes in the duties of the CED would require the assent of respective county committees to determine if the CED would be able to assume added duties.

DAFP Response: We appreciate the suggestion submitted requesting a change to FSFL policy where CED's can be trained to have limited loan approval authority for FSFL's up to $50,000 or $100,000.

The National Price Support Division and Farm Loan staff will work together to develop a modified "no cost" loan approval authority training package. At a later time, we will share more details about the loan approval authority training package and intended audience.

Agreement: As resources may permit, DAFLP and DAFP agreed to put together a pilot program to give CED's authority to conduct financial analysis on Farm Stored Facility Loans under the County Committee approval limits. The COC would still have final approval up to $100,000.00 for all FSFL loans. NASCOE accepts the response.

ITEM 2: MAILING CONTRACTS TO OTHER COUNTIES

Issue: Mailing of original FSA-578 certifications and ARC/PLC contracts after they are faxed or emailed to the office when working in nationwide customer service. I took a certification for a county and emailed the signed 578 & map to the county, now I have to take the time to also make out an envelope, make a copy of the original and mail the original to the county office that I just emailed the paperwork to. What a waste of time and finances (46.5 cents for each certification I have to mail to different offices.) Plus why do I need a copy of the contract since I have the copy of the email that I sent?

NASCOE Position: According to procedure State and County Office Action State and County Offices that process nationwide customer service FSA-578's must:

- immediately FAX a copy of the signed FSA-578 and map to the producer's administrative county
- mail the original signed FSA-578 and map to the producer's administrative county
- maintain a copy of the signed FSA-578 and map.

When taking a FSA-578 or ARC/PLC contract under Nationwide Customer Service we must immediately fax or email the administrative county a copy of the certification or contract and then we must mail the original to the administrative county and keep a copy.

To remove the redundancy of having a lot of paper work in both offices by eliminating the mailing of the FSA-578 and/or ARC/PLC contract when working in Nationwide Customer Service because it will already either faxed or emailed the information and the original can be kept on file in the office. The forms should be emailed or faxed and the original filed in the office that took the form. The emailed form could be stored in a sent folder with the County's name on it, but the original would still be available if needed.

(Reference #8)

DAFP Response: DAFP is not opposed to only requiring the emailed or faxed copy of the document being sent to the administrative county of the farm, however, there are some concerns that must be addressed.

Generally, the policy for sending/receiving contracts and certifications is outdated when compared to the technology available. While this technology is usually reliable, there are times when it fails. Also, the scanned and emailed copy of a map or the faxed copy of a map is not of the best quality which would necessitate the mailing of at least the map from one county to the other.

Policy for the sending and receiving of certifications and contracts needs to be removed from each program's policy handbook and included in handbook 1-CM. DAFP will move towards developing a more user friendly format in handling producers that are using the Nationwide Customer Access function to enroll or certify farms.

Agreement: NASCOE accepts the response.

ITEM 3: AGLEARN TRAINING

Issue: Training on various topics is provided for through the AgLearn website and employees are to log on and take the required training when the training has been posted to AgLearn and before the deadline.

NASCOE Position: Notification of training requirements are ongoing throughout the year, some have several months to complete, some have a relatively short timeframe to complete the training. During heavy workload times, it is difficult to complete the trainings with the short turnaround timeframe.

Have all required training issued and posted to Ag Learn at the beginning of the FY and have the year to work on the required training, or at least be able to see all the training at once and when it is due to be completed and be able to manage the completion of it more efficiently.

(Reference #11)

HRD Response: HRD appreciates NASCOE's idea in this area. However, the Ag Learn courses are typically created by a specific program area (civil rights or IT) or at the Department level. As a result, HRD cannot load the courses prior to their availability from the appropriate area. HRD will; however, make a note and load the course just as soon as it is available thus giving employees the maximum amount of notice to complete their training requirement and meet the established deadlines.

Agreement: NASCOE accepts the response. HRD will work with the AgLearn contractor to enhance the software to add an email notification feature for when courses have been added to an employee's worklist and the possibility of a 30-day deadline notification reminder email.

ITEM 4: STAFFING/PERSONNEL

Issue: The SWA RSO pilot has become an approved organization and consists of employees in state offices throughout the southwest area. There have been several job opportunities within the RSO, but they only list state offices as potential duty locations.

NASCOE Position: By limiting duty stations to state offices, numerous highly-qualified candidates do not apply because they don't want to move across the state. If a job can be carried out across state lines, it doesn't make sense that the same job couldn't be carried out remotely in a county office.

RSO positions, as well as many other NOF jobs that allow STO duty stations, should allow the selected employee to work out of a county office.

(Reference #13)

HRD Response: HRD will defer to DAFO on this issue for the RSO positions. If DAFO wishes to pursue this option, HRD can certainly accommodate the "area of consideration" in the vacancy announcement process. As a side note, there are some STO positions which are located in county offices.

As far as National Office positions, this would be left up to the selecting official's discretion. However, once again, HRD could certainly accommodate the "area of consideration" in the vacancy announcement process.

DAFO Response: The previous SED RSO Council established a policy, which strongly encouraged the duty station of RSO employees in SWA STO's; however, they also afforded some latitude to the Selecting Official (in consultation with RSO Manager) to duty station an employee in a County Office. A compelling reason for doing so was required. Only one such request has been approved.

DAFO has discussed this item with the Manager of the RSO, who feels that the RSO needs its employees co-located, not scattered. Concentrations of employees provide for a number of benefits including training, cross-training, and enhanced privacy protection because of the nature of the work performed, all of which ultimately provide payback to the end-user/customer in form of available and informed personnel to respond rapidly and efficiently.

There is also the issue of space to accommodate both the newly hired RSO employee in small offices.

Agreement: This item will be considered in the future. They will discuss the possibility of doing remote positions with the RSO management. NASCOE accepts the response.

ITEM 5: CRP CONTINUOUS CONTRACTS

Issue: 7 CFR 1410.22 states "For general signup and continuous signup contracts except grasslands, mid-contract management must be conducted to implement management activities, such as disking and

prescribed burning according to an approved conservation plan, as part of the CRP contractual obligation on all contracts entered into under general signup and continuous signup, as specified in 7 CFR 1410.30".

NASCOE Position: Continuous CRP offers are made and approved based upon a determined resource need on the offered land. By requiring that the cover established on this resource concern be disturbed by a mid-contract management activity, it defeats the purpose of establishing a practice to correct a resource need

To maintain the intent of the Continuous CRP program, which is to address a resource concern and incorporate the appropriate practice to correct the resource concern, an update to the regulations needs to be made. Not all CRP contracts need to have mid-contract management practices which will disturb the established cover.

(Reference #16)

DAFP Response: The requirement for at least 1 management activity during the contract period for all practices, except CP87 and CP88, is to ensure the approved cover, applicable plant diversity and wildlife benefits are maintained, while ensuring the resource concern(s) continues to be addressed. Management activities are site specific, developed in coordination with the appropriate technical agency with the experience necessary to ensure the resource concern(s) are not jeopardized during the approved management activity, and are included as part of the producers conservation plan of operations. This is applicable to all practices, not just those enrolled under the continuous CRP signup provisions. In addition, participants may receive cost-share for approved management activities to lessen the cost of such activities and further ensure the approved cover is in compliance with the practice standards and conservation plan of operations. Over 30 years of experience with CRP cover establishment, maintenance, and management activities has shown that appropriate management activities performed at the appropriate time helps ensure the approved cover, plant diversity, and wildlife benefits are present and maintained throughout the contract period. Such activities also assist participants in maintaining compliance with their contract requirements, which results in fewer contract violations for non-compliance, fewer contract terminations, and fewer required refunds of payments. In addition, the required management activities ensure that tax payer funds are used in an efficient and effective manner for the benefits obtained, while treating all participants in a fair and equitable manner.

Though not specifically referenced in 2-CRP (Rev 5), Mid Contract Management is required by the CFR and Statute.

As you have referenced, 7 CFR 1410.22 states "For general signup and continuous signup contracts except grasslands, mid-contract management must be conducted to implement management activities, such as disking and prescribed burning according to an approved conservation plan, as part of the CRP contractual obligation on all contracts entered into under general signup and continuous signup, as specified in 7 CFR 1410.30".

Further, Section 1232(a)(5) DUTIES OF OWNERS AND OPERATORS.

(a) IN GENERAL — Under the terms of a contract entered into under this subchapter, during the term of the contract, an owner or operator of a farm or ranch shall agree (5) to undertake management on the land as needed throughout the term of the contract to implement the conservation plan.

Agreement: Farm Bill discussions are going on currently and there could be some discretion used in the future to work with NRCS technical determinations. At this point, mid contract management could be modified but it must be followed.

NASCOE accepts this response.

ITEM 6: COC ELECTION BALLOTS

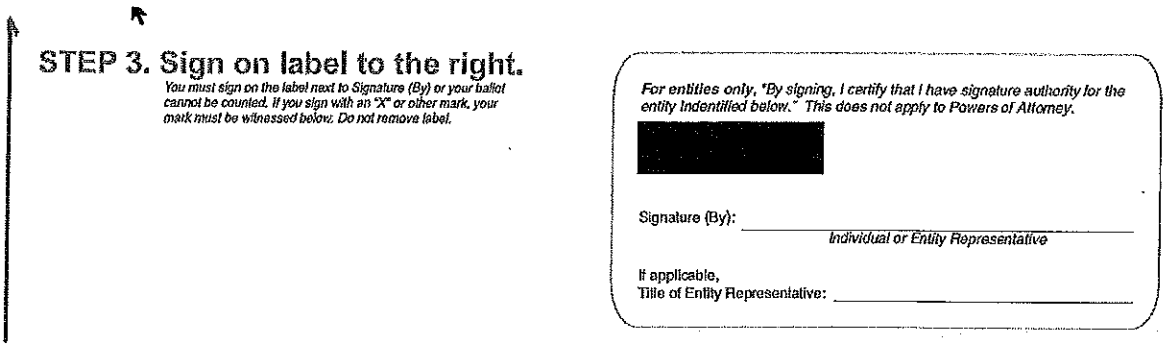
Issue: There are no clear instructions on the election ballot that a title is required if the voter is an entity.

NASCOE Position: Clear instructions should be added to the election ballot stating that a title for an entity is required.

Under Step 3, Sign on label to the right, it says "You must sign on the label next to Signature (By) or your ballot cannot be counted", we could add an additional sentence that states, If you are an entity, trust, corporation, partnership, etc., you MUST include a title such as trustee, member, etc. or your ballot will not be counted. This sentence could even be in bold or red print.

(Reference #25)

DAFO Response: Below is what the label looks like now. The suggested addition could be added under the directions for Step 3. The label has not changed for years, and there have been no issues so far. However, it is doable. We will have to discuss this matter with MSD and the various contractors involved in the ballot process.



STEP 3. Sign on label to the right.

You must sign on the label next to Signature (By) or your ballot cannot be counted. If you sign with an "X" or other mark, your mark must be witnessed below. Do not remove label.

For entities only, "By signing, I certify that I have signature authority for the entity indentified below." This does not apply to Powers of Attorney.

[redacted]

Signature (By): _____

Individual or Entity Representative

If applicable,
Title of Entity Representative: _____

Agreement: NASCOE accepts the response. DAFO has agreed to insert a statement (note) in red to list example titles for persons to enter for signing authority. DAFO also agreed to update procedure to allow County Committee's discretion to determine validity of individuals signing on behalf of an entity without entering a title on the ballot.

ITEM 7: COT OPENINGS AND PLACEMENTS

Issue: Currently COT's are hired, trained and then apply for county office openings. During 2015 negotiations, NASCOE proposed hiring COT's for the county office where the COT would be permanently

placed and then training would take place. NASCOE noted that this proposal would increase applications from individuals who wanted to be in that specific county which would lead to a stable county office into the future. Management expressed openness to consider NASCOE's suggested changes and NASCOE provided a white paper with concepts on how these changes might benefit county committees looking for stability and provide more opportunities for county office employees.

NASCOE Position: Just like the FLOT position, NASCOE feels that a COT should be hired for the county office where the CED position is needed. Further, this proposal is of high priority for our membership. Management has not formally responded to NASCOE's suggested changes to the COT program hiring process. NASCOE requests that management respond in writing to the concepts to allow further discussion on this topic and search for solutions to NASCOE's and management's differences. A PT would be able to apply for a specific CED position and be trained for that position, in other than for hard to fill positions

The COC would make the selection for the county and the state committee would actually hire the COTS. The position would be advertised for a specific county, the application is done through USAJOBS, the STC selects COTS and would submit 3 names for county openings. *(This item was also submitted in 2016)*

(Reference #31)

HRD Response: The decision on how to select and train COTs as well as place them upon completion of the training program is an agency choice. Obviously, there are pros and cons associated with the current at-large method as well as the specific location method which NASCOE supports. There is certainly value in the at-large program as it allows states the ability to hire and train COTs before actual vacancies occur. This way, when the vacancy does occur, there are individuals ready to be interviewed and selected for the CED position rather than just beginning the training process. HRD will defer to DAFO for their determination on what is best for the States and County Offices on this issue.

DAFO Response: Not all FLOTs are hired for a specific office, as the past. DAFO continues to believe that states cannot determine with complete accuracy where vacancies will be in the future.

Agreement: NASCOE accepts the response.

ITEM 9: ENHANCING MIDAS SOFTWARE

Issue: Currently MIDAS users can search farm number, tract number, owner, operator etc. Being able to search in Midas by CRP contract # would be useful for farms that have multiple contracts on the same tract number. For instance, if a farm was reconstituted and the farm number changed, every CRP contract would have to be revised. Every field with CRP would have to be revised in Midas as well to add the suffix to the CRP contract #. If you could search by contract, you could ensure that all the field numbers were updated correctly.

NASCOE Position: Modify the search options in MIDAS to include being able to search by CRP contract number and have all CLU's associated with that shown in the search results. This will lead to fewer omissions on the CRP mismatched report.

DAFP Response: This suggestion is being added to our list of enhancements and will be implemented as soon as resources and budget can be allocated to the enhancement.

Agreement: NASCOE accepts the response.

ITEM 10: MODIFY THE CCC-576

Issue: The issue is that when you enter multiple losses for a producer and the notice of loss application prints, it prints to a continuous run of pages. The first page of the CCC-576 Notice of Loss, has the producer's name, crop year and state and county code listed. However, the continued pages of the CCC-576 do not have any information listed regarding to name, crop, year, state and county code or page number. If the pages get out of order or mixed with another producers notice of loss you cannot tell which page goes where.

NASCOE Position: Modify the CCC-576 to include the producer's name, crop year, state code, county code and page number in the header to each page of the CCC-576 when it prints.

DAFP Response: This enhancement is being adopted and will be implemented in the near future.

Agreement: NASCOE accepts the response.

ITEM 11: USING CO SLOTS AND HIRING PROCEDURE TO FILL GS POSITIONS

Issue: Several states have routinely utilized CO ceiling slots to fill positions for the GS side. More and more often this is being done because it is usually less complicated and quicker than going through the GS hiring procedure. Many times the intent is to convert the position to GS in a few months but there are several cases around the country where this has not been done or has not been done timely.

NASCOE Position: NASCOE understands that FSA is understaffed both on the CO and GS side and that SED's have the ability to flex ceiling slot from CO to GS and vice versus. While this might be a tool that is available for states to consider it should not be a common occurrence and the slots should revert back to the original ceiling as soon as possible.

HRD Response: While this can be done, HRD would caution offices on doing this as a way to circumvent merit promotion hiring policies on the GS side. This hiring method should truly be used when we don't have an FTE available for the position needing to be filled.

DAFO Response: The "flexing" of staff years from CO to GS and vice versa is a tool used by some SED's to mitigate short-term staffing short falls and meet critical needs. It should be understood that positons are not flexed, rather it is the staff year (I.e., funding) that is flexed to fill a critical need. It continues to be DAFO's policy that the flexing of staff years is a short term situation and not a common occurrence. It is DAFO's policy that approved flexing does not carry beyond the fiscal year for which it is approved. In recent years, many State's individual employment levels have been below their State ceiling levels and the need for flexing has been minimal.

Agreement: NASCOE accepts the response.

ITEM 12: INCLUDING THE NASCOE NEW HIRE PACKET PART OF EXHIBIT 6 IN 28-PM

Issue: NASCOE and management have agreed in previous negotiation meetings that State Offices shall make NASCOE membership informational brochures and application forms available to all new hires. This has been communicated to SED's and AO's through emails and memos from DAFO to the state offices. However, with routine turnover in SED's and DAFO, NASCOE has to make subsequent requests that State Offices be reminded of this agreement.

NASCOE Position: If the membership informational brochure, membership application and FSA-444 were added to the new hire checklist in exhibit 6 in 28-PM it would be made available to all new employees as previously agreed to by NASCOE and Management.

HRD Response: While HRD recognizes NASCOE as an employee organization, we do not feel that putting informational material in our agency handbooks is appropriate. Exhibit 22 of Handbook 22-PM, contains a copy of the Labor-Management Relations Agreement between USDA/FSA and NASCOE, and Section 3, Item 15 of this handbooks specifically states that solicitation of membership shall be conducted during non-duty hours of the employees involved.

Agreement: NASCOE accepts the response. HRD has agreed to add the FSA-444 to the checklist of required forms in the exhibit of 28-PM in a handbook update. HRD also agreed to insert a link to all employee associations for information in 28-PM.

ITEM 13: IT CYBERSECURITY

Issue: Our Country is in an ongoing battle of cyber threats and attacks. In fact, several thousand Federal employees have had their SS#'s stolen. After which, and over the past 18 months, Federal employees have been offered a free service of identity protection through CSID.

NASCOE Position: The threats on our identity are still very real and the need for cyber security has only increased. Would like to see all employees offered Identity protection during their employment years and possibly at a reduced cost for retirees.

HRD Response: The decision as to what type of credit monitoring and identity protection employees/retirees will receive as a result of the cyber incidents falls with the jurisdiction of OPM rather than HRD.

Agreement: NASCOE accepts the response.

ITEM 14: IT/WEBTA

Issue: WebTA 4.2 is not user friendly. The screens are hard to read/follow when loading time and attendance. The screens in the new WebTA system are very hard on the eyes when reading them, and program codes are not listed in order.

NASCOE Position: Several modifications would greatly increase the efficiency of recording our time and attendance. Those would include differentiating each line, grouping the activities alphabetically and

locking the header so that the day is always visible when you scroll to the bottom of the entries. In addition, it does not read very easy when the CED's time and attendance is printed for the County Committee's review and approval.

OBF Response: OBF concurs with this recommendation. OBF and HRD are working together to have a change implemented by the NFC to address this at a future date to be determined.

HRD Response: The WebTA 4.2 dashboard issue came up after implementation. NFC responded that the WebTA 4.2 system is 508 compliant and the current display is as designed. NFC advised that any requested screen changes to the application would be an enhancement. On February 27, 2017, HRD submitted a follow-up inquiry to OHRM to determine whether USDA has any plans to requisition the enhancements and if so, what specifically, and when might they be available in WebTA 4.2. HRD will continue to follow-up on this issue.

Agreement: The request has been made to list activities alphabetically. There has been assurance from Kronos to simplify WebTa. To ensure the headquarters team is notified of the problems. They are working on setting up a SharePoint site for state offices to input problems and issues. They are aware that there are attempts to address issues and this has bypassed headquarters and this is not a good situation. Everyone is facing the same problems. There are people from the field involved in testing. NASCOE accepts the response. A list will be compiled and submitted through STO. A NASCOE POC (Dennis Ray) will have access to the SharePoint site to submit issues.

Items from 2016 NASCOE Negotiations (Resubmitted)

ITEM 2: SHARED MANAGEMENT-PROCEDURE

Issue: "Before STC approval of the establishment of a permanent shared management operation, the SED will consult the NASCOE state affiliate." At present, many STO's are not following this procedure.

NASCOE Position: NASCOE recommends that SED's be reminded of applicable handbook procedures in 27-PM, paragraph 52C. SED's are to consult in pre-decisional format before the establishment of a shared management operation.

HRD Response: We agree that the policy requires the consultation and defer to DAFO on any reminders to or reinforcement of the policy with the States. We do stand ready to assist if any clarifications or changes to the handbook need to be issued.

DAFO Response: States routinely send in requests for approval of shared management proposal. DAFO always ascertains if consultation has taken place. If this is not happening, we should be informed.

Negotiation agreement: NASCOE would like an official response from the state association attached to the decisions regarding shared management to ensure the NASCOE state affiliate is involved. DAFO will review this issue to come up with a solution to show a written NASCOE position accompanying the State request for permanent shared management. A response will be sent back to NASCOE within 30 days. This is to ensure the states are following current policy. NASCOE will provide feedback in the consultation. Written documentation of the consultation with the state association included in the

submission to DAFO for permanent shared management. An email will be sufficient for a response. HRD can draft policy for DAFO review to be submitted to NASCOE.

DAFO Response: Shared management is and has been a reality for many years. Given budgetary and legislative restrictions, we see no realistic alternatives in the near future. DAFO approves all shared management requests and ensures that NASCOE affiliates have been contacted and that all requisite COC and STC approvals have been obtained.

HRD Response: HRD will defer to DAFO on this issue; however, if the decision is made to incorporate this into the handbook, HRD can certainly update Handbook 27-PM, Paragraph 52C accordingly.

Agreement: Management will agree to consulting the associations during the proposed establishment of a permanent shared management situation and having COC involvement. There will be an amendment to 27 PM to include such reference. NASCOE accepts this response.

ITEM 4: TEMPORARY SHARED MANAGEMENT-LENGTH OF TIME

Issue: Provisions in 27-PM paragraph 53C "temporary shared management operations shall not exceed 120 calendar days." At present, many STO's are not following this procedure.

NASCOE Position: NASCOE recommends that SED's be reminded of applicable handbook procedures. Procedures shall be followed in instances where shared management operations exceed 120 days by SED's meeting with COC's to "work out a permanent solution. Any exceptions to the 120 calendar day limitation shall be approved in advance by DAFO."

HRD Response: We concur with the statement of the policy and defer to DAFO on any reminders to or reinforcement of the policy with the States. We do stand ready to assist if any clarifications or changes to the handbook need to be issued.

DAFO Response: All extensions are approved by DAFO after it is determined how long the shared management operation will continue and what plans the State has to end it. As was have reiterated many time, budgetary and current Congressional restrictions prevent us from taking necessary steps to ease the situation of so many shared management office.

Agreement: DAFO agreed to have temporary defined as 6 months and the review will have attached COC minutes showing the consultation with the state affiliate of NASCOE was done.

DAFO Response: Given the many variables is each situation, it is often difficult to determine prospectively when it might be feasible to discontinue a share management operation. DAFO always asks the state what their future plans are.

HRD Response: The 120 days has already been changed to 6 months in Handbook 27-PM. As soon as Revision 2 is released, this will be visible to all employees.

Agreement: Management agreed to have COC's involved in shared management extensions. DAFO agreed to have temporary defined as 6 months and the review will have attached COC minutes showing the consultation with the state affiliate of NASCOE was done.

NASCOE accepts this response.